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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/PD (LMING); AF/S (HTREGER)

PARIS FOR ARS

STATE DEPT PASS TO BBG

BBG FOR VOA (GWENDOLYN DILLARD)

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SUBJECT: MOZAMBIKAN "IDOL" SHOW CELEBRATES NEW ORLEANS  
IN KATRINA AFTERMATH

1. SUMMARY. The United States received a huge vote of sympathy when Mozambique's most popular television entertainment program, the Fama Show, devoted a one-hour special to celebrating the spirit of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The September 26 live broadcast, based on "American Idol" and coordinated with PAS, featured a mix of well-known songs about New Orleans, music written for the occasion, and brief remarks by the U.S. Ambassador. It reached an audience of about 500,000 largely young people, expressing the remarkable empathy that Mozambicans feel towards the American victims of the hurricanes, feelings flowing from their own disastrous floods in 2000. PAS has sent a DVD copy of the show to AF/PD END SUMMARY.

THE MUSIC IS THE MESSAGE

2. At 1730 on Monday, September 26, the country's most popular entertainment series, the Fama ("fama" meaning fame in Portuguese) Show, aired a one-hour special dedicated to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Repeated on October 4, the show opened with a background video footage of storm damage and victims, set to a narration by a Fama master of ceremonies. Next STV CEO Daniel David and Ambassador Helen La Lime made brief statements. David emphasized the program as a statement of solidarity on the part of Mozambicans. Ambassador La Lime noted that Mozambicans had suffered from floods in 2000, and understood exactly what this kind of natural disaster meant. She averred that it was especially appropriate that Mozambican sympathy be expressed in music, considering that New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz.

3. The rest of the program featured a series of songs about New Orleans, solidarity, and one poem set to music - "America" - written for the occasion. The music included: We Are the World, Don't Let the Sun Go Down, House of the Rising Sun, Heal the World, Tears in Heaven, Show Me the Meaning, a Mozambican song, Chove Chuva (Rain Rain), We Shall Overcome, and a rousing finale of "When the Saints Go Marching In," with full audience participation.

CONCEIVING THE PROGRAM CONCEPT

4. Soico TV (STV) CEO Daniel David came up with the original idea. He explained that he had reacted just the way as other Mozambicans to the powerful footage of Americans of predominantly of African descent caught up in the storm damage. The U.S. and the world reacted boldly five years ago to help Mozambicans; he was inspired to find a way to convey the empathy felt by Mozambicans, and their desire lend a helping hand in any way possible.

PAS IN ON THE TAKEOFF

5. David and PAS already had established an excellent relationship. It seemed only natural to run the concept by PAS, which immediately backed it and offered to generate American participation. With PAS on board, the Fama special took off with wings that would set it apart from the regular Friday night program. The time would be crucial. He chose the 1730 time slot on a Monday holiday because an unusually high number of middle-class families -- notably teenagers, the target audience -- would be at home.

6. One important difference was the decision to jettison the usual competitive aspects of the show, such as a panel of judges. Singers who had already performed on Fama and thus were well known agreed to participate. STV and PAS together produced a video montage of post-hurricane images to open the show. In addition to arranging the Ambassador's on-camera appearance, PAS identified an American USAID employee who volunteered to sing "The House of the Rising Sun."

SOICO TV: THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE TO STATE MEDIA

7. Soico TV is one of two private alternatives to official TV Mozambique (the other is the church-affiliate TV Miramar). Broadcasting in Maputo, Xai-Xai, Inhambane, and Beira, its prime-time ratings often surpass those of TVM. Funded entirely by Mozambican investors, it exemplifies what can happen when the airwaves open up to private enterprise, a formula for marketing success similar to that used by networks elsewhere: Low-brow entertainment in the form of Brazilian soap operas and Fama, plus fast-paced, sometimes sensationalist news.

17. The Fama Show special married STV's mass entertainment and public affairs strengths. By attaching the brand name "Fama Show" to the broadcast, STV guaranteed itself a young mass audience. By dedicating it to the victims of the hurricanes and invoking a legacy of great music, Fama morphed into a public affairs show. Because the initiative came from the top (the CEO), it happened fast. But without the involvement of PAS and the Ambassador, it probably would not have happened at all. Our role was essential symbolically as an expression of the American people.

#### THE ULTIMATE TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY

18. COMMENT: PAS could not have chosen a more effective public diplomacy vehicle, a mass media target of opportunity with a huge built-in youth audience. We were ready to seize the moment because of a strong pre-existing relationship with STV; all we had to do was to say yes to the core concept, and move forward. Money was never an issue since STV covered all expenses. PAS simply helped a local institution to do what it wanted to do anyway, and accomplish the job with a credibility that the USG never could have had on its own. Consequently and perhaps paradoxically, the Fama Show special demonstrated that the hurricanes have had the effect of softening the image of the U.S. among Mozambicans by humanizing us.  
Dudley